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DEPARTMENT FOR INL

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SUBJECT: MOURINO DEATH A BLOW, BUT UNLIKELY TO UNDERMINE
GOM RESOLVE IN DRUG WAR

REF: MEXICO 2371

Classified By: Political Minister Counselor Charles V. Barclay. Reason:
1.4 (b), (d).

¶1. (C) Summary. The tragic death of Juan Camilo Mourino, along with several colleagues at Mexico's Secretariat of Government (SEGOB), represents a personal blow for President Calderon, and the loss of talented professionals, but should neither undermine the president politically nor prove to be debilitating to his efforts to combat crime and violence here. Mourino was not at the center of the GOM's security strategy and may well have been on his way out as Secretary of Government. While evidence that the crash was an act of sabotage would be a game changer in Calderon's battle against the cartels, all indicators at this juncture suggest this was an accident. End Summary.

¶2. (U) Secretary of Government Juan Camilo Mourino, close friend and confidant of President Calderon, and former Deputy Attorney General Jose Luis Santiago Vasconcelos were killed on Tuesday night along with up to ten others when the LearJet in which they were traveling plummeted into an upscale business and residential neighborhood in Mexico City. Mourino and colleagues were returning from a public security event in San Luis Potosi. Media reports vary, but up to seven other passengers and crew on the plane and at least three people on the ground were killed.

¶3. (C) Mourino's death undoubtedly is a blow to Calderon, who counted the cabinet member as a personal friend and probably his closest political advisor. Calderon promoted Mourino to Secretary of Government in January 2009 to replace an embattled and ineffectual predecessor; the young politico, however, almost immediately fell under a cloud of malfeasance accusations that Mexico's opposition hoped would undermine his role as Calderon's political point man. While he was considered to be moderately successful in advancing Calderon's energy reform package, there had been widespread speculation in the past two weeks that he was wrapping up his tenure at SEGOB and would depart in coming months to run for governor or federal deputy of his home state of Campeche. The president last night said in an impromptu speech at the Mexico City airport that the country had lost "a great Mexican, intelligent, loyal, (who was) committed to his ideals and to the country."

¶4. (C) Many analysts the day after the crash called Mourino's death a serious setback in Calderon's ongoing fight against organized crime, and it is clear that his loss leaves a serious gap in Calderon's cabinet, at least for the short-term. Nevertheless, Mourino was never Calderon's key security advisor. Mourino's role in Calderon's National

Security Cabinet was more PR than substance, say security analysts; he was charged with advancing Calderon's law enforcement strategy and reform efforts among the public and in Congress, but had far less policy input than either Secretary of Public Security Garcia Luna or Attorney General Medina Mora. Calderon's appointment of Jorge Tello Peon as his national security adviser on October 19 added another layer between SEGOB and the president. While Mourino's death leaves a large hole in Calderon's cabinet lineup, the president is not likely to be distracted from his anti-crime and reform efforts.

¶5. (C) Also killed was former Deputy Attorney General Santiago Vasconcelos. Vasconcelos, who had been charged with developing and implementing administrative and legislative measures to advance justice and law enforcement reforms after his dismissal from Mexico's Attorney General's office (PGR) last July. Vasconcelos was a close contact of USG law enforcement for many years during his tenure at PGR and was highly regarded, despite occasional unsubstantiated reports that he had been compromised by the cartels. Caught up in last summer's purge of senior officials at PGR (reftel), Vasconcelos' expertise was nevertheless tapped to advise the administration on implementing justice and law enforcement reforms. However, he retained little substantive authority to implement policy.

¶7. (U) Commentators are already speculating that Education Secretary Josefina Vasquez Mota, IMSS Director Juan Francisco Molinar Horcasitas, or Labor Secretary Lozano may fill the SEGOB vacancy. Another possibility is the current interim

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Secretary, Abraham Gonzalez, who has served as Deputy Secretary of SEGOB since the beginning of the Calderon Administration. Separately, an influential PAN senator told poloff that German Martinez, currently PAN President, is also a possibility.

¶8. (C) Comment: Ironically, Mourino's death may galvanize public and congressional support for pending public security legislation. While there are currently no indications of foul play, speculation among Mexico's innately suspicious public and political class is widespread that drug cartels must have carried out the attack. If evidence of such foul play emerges, it would drastically change the nature of the government fight against cartels. End Comment.
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